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August 9, 2004  
Immediate Release

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## **Environment Department Redoubles Enforcement Sweep at Sunland Park Landfill; Efforts Uncover More Illegal Waste**

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) today continued its compliance crackdown at the Camino Real landfill in Sunland Park. Beginning at 4:30 this morning teams of inspectors from the Department's Solid Waste, Hazardous Waste, Air Quality and Occupational Health and Safety Bureaus continued to thoroughly inspect each truckload of waste entering the landfill.

As of 9:30 am today these efforts had already uncovered two problematic loads containing hypodermic needles and other infectious waste from dairy, veterinary or medical operations.

"I hope that this effort sends a strong message to the solid waste industry that we will not allow New Mexico to become a dumping ground for illegal waste," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. "Since El Paso relies on New Mexico for the disposal of the majority of its commercial waste, we expect the people of Texas to respect our laws and take every necessary precaution to make sure our health and environment are protected.

This infectious garbage can pose grave health hazards, especially to waste haulers and landfill workers," Secretary Curry continued. "We intend to continue our efforts until we are confident this problem has been addressed."

Illegal disposal of medical and veterinary waste in an unpermitted facility can lead to an increased risk of contracting many blood-borne illnesses including hepatitis B and AIDS.

Today's infectious waste shipments are in addition to three truckloads discovered late last week, which originated at hospitals in El Paso. On Friday morning, City of El Paso and State of Texas environmental officials announced they had also found an illegal shipment of medical waste at El Paso's McCombs landfill. This load was scheduled for disposal at the Camino Real landfill until it was redirected to McCombs.

"This should be a wake up call to waste generators and landfill operators," said Secretary Curry. "If you are trying to slip illegal waste into a New Mexico landfill, we will find you and we will stop you."

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In addition to medical waste shipments, NMED personnel have also taken 19 samples from approximately 12 loads of waste containing suspected asbestos. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, chronic exposure to asbestos can result in a lung disease termed asbestosis, which may lead to severe impairment of respiratory function and ultimately death. Other effects from chronic inhalation exposure to asbestos include an increased risk of lung cancer.

NMED's enforcement efforts began Wednesday August 4. This crackdown was directed by Governor Bill Richardson following an anonymous tip of illegal disposal at the Camino Real landfill in Sunland Park.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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